

Moravian Church  
King Street vicinity  
Christiansted  
St. Croix Island  
Virgin Islands

HABS No. VI-28

HABS  
VI,  
1-CHRIS  
52-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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VI  
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52-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MORAVIAN CHURCH

HABS No. VI-28

Location: King Street, Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands

General Statement:

Architectural interest: The church is a mid-19th century structure with only minor alterations built on the site and incorporating remains of an earlier church. Its historical significance lies mainly in the part the Moravian Missions played in the cultural and social development of the Danish Virgin Islands. The architectural character of the church is not typical of the Moravian architecture of the islands.

Condition of fabric: The masonry structure is in good condition with only some flaking of the stucco finish. All wood, floors, rafters and wood sheathing are infested with termites.

Description of Exterior:

Orientation: The building is located approximately 600 feet back from King Street on the south end of town. The entrance porch elevation is towards the street and facing northwest. While the altar is at the northeast end. The Mission House (HABS No. VI-29) farther up the hill to the south and a recent church school building is to the north of the church.

Foundations: The building rests on a base which extends to the first floor line showing three feet above the ground on the northwest side and tapering to zero on both sides as the ground level rises. The foundation is of an undetermined depth.

Wall construction: The walls are stuccoed masonry brick rubble. The bell tower and porch gable are constructed in wood. The facades are marked with brick bands at the plate line. The porch is constructed of four round brick columns, resting on the landing of the flared staircase. All openings are framed in brick with round arches.

Openings:

Doors and windows: The main rectangle of the building is marked by seven evenly spaced openings on the long sides and on the ends by three openings at the rear and four at the altar end. The northwest side has a porch and the main entry. A one-room wing with two openings to each of its three exterior sides is centered on the southeast side of the building. Each masonry opening is in two parts separated by combination sill and head jambs. The door openings have shutters and jalousies. The shutters are double-board construction with interior diagonal boards laid flush in a frame and exterior vertical boards. The door jalousies are four-panelled. The arrangement is repeated in the space above to the level of the balcony. The portion of the openings above the floor of the balcony have only shutters. The northeast end of the church is treated differently with four windows of which the center two have uninterrupted shutters and three tiers of glazed 12-light sash with glazed fanlights. The door to the southeast wing from the church is a 3-panelled wooden door

with a masonry filled-in arch. The one exterior door to the wing is on the southwest side and is equipped in the same manner as the shuttered windows of the room. On the side is a recessed panel of a former opening now filled in. A small door from the balcony gives access to the attic in the gable over the porch.

Roof: The church has a wooden frame hipped roof with corrugated metal on wooden sheathing. The gable roof of the wing and the porch extend out to the southeast and northwest, respectively. The latter supports the eight-sided bell cupola.

Cornice and eaves: There are two brick bands at the plate line. Continuous gutters on all sides lead to the northeast end and are connected to the vaulted cistern.

Porch: At the center bay of the northwest facade is a porch reached by a flight of 13 steps. The porch roof is supported by four large circular brick columns with square bases and capitals and two bands at the upper third of the column. Between the columns are wooden board arches one-board thick. In the wooden gable above is a small jalousie. The gable has clapboard siding which is repeated on the eight sides of the cupola drum. The cupola is made up of four large crossbraced arches alternated with smaller arches and is crowned with a wood-shingled octagonal cone and a weather vane.

#### Description of the Interior

Floor plan: The plans are a simple rectangle with the porch to the northwest and the additional room to the southeast. Directly to the northeast of the building is a cistern reached by a flight of stairs. A U-shaped balcony extends along the rear, two bays wide, and along both long sides of the church.

Stairways: Stairs to the balcony are located in the rear corners of the church. They are wooden with closets in the infill beneath the first of two runs of 11 and 8 steps each. The stair balusters are the same as those on the balcony railing but vary in size. The stairs make a 90° turn at the landing.

Balcony: The underside of the balcony has wooden sheathing, and the upper surface is stepped up away from the railing in 6 risers. Two sets of columns support the balcony and 8" round ones are spaced at regular intervals down the length of the church. Octagonal columns are grouped under the center of the rear portion of the balcony, on either side of the central aisle and support the small reed organ above. The balcony has a plain fascia board.

Floor: The main floor is of wood with the altar area raised on step. The southeast wing has a floor of 9" x 9" stone tiles. All the aisles are carpeted. The porch is of stone and brick, and the balcony of wood.

Wall and ceiling finishes: The walls are plastered and painted white and complemented by shutters painted green and mahogany furnishings. The ceiling is a wooden curved tray type, painted white. The plate is covered by a moulded fascia board.

Trim: The stairs and balcony balustrades, the fascia boards and the mahogany furnishings form the internal adornment. Externally the trim consists of the two bands at the plate line, arched windows with their projecting sills, and the treatment of the four brick columns of the porch and the plinth on which the building rests.

Hardware: The shutters are hung with wrought-iron strap hinges and hooks, and are equipped with large wooden bars, gently curved on one side, for securing them. On the main door is a wooden box lock with metal corners.

Lighting: There are electric lights attached to the columns and walls of the church.

#### Other

General setting: The church is the central structure in the Moravian Mission complex which includes to the south the large three-story Mission House with outbuildings and a cemetery beyond. To the north is the more recent one-story school building. The complex is on the edge of town and is surrounded to the rear by fields. A driveway off King Street serves all the buildings. There is a large brick-paved area to the southwest of the church, and a retaining wall to its rear.

Outbuildings: The only outbuilding related directly to the church is an elaborate cistern cut into the hill to the northeast of the church. It is reached down a short flight of steps which are flanked by curved retaining walls. The cistern has a wooden door in the top front.

Walks: The drive extends to the Mission House and a walk continues across a causeway over an intermittent stream bed to the cemetery.

Landscaping: The entire area is informally planted with native trees and shrubs.

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May 1960

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HABS  
National Park Service  
September 1984